DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 246 513 CS 504 646

AUTHOR Beebe, Steven A.; Biggers, Thompson
TITLE The Status of the Basic Course in Intercultural Communication at U. S. Colleges and Universities.
PUB DATE May 84
NOTE 21p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Communication Association (34th, San Francisco, CA, May 24-28, 1984).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Communication Research; *Course Content; Course Descriptions; Educational Research; Higher Education; *Intercultural Communication; *Introductory Courses; *Speech Curriculum; *Speech Instruction; Teacher Qualifications; Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

One hundred thirty-eight college communication departments responded to a survey to assess the status of intercultural communication instruction. The questionnaire was designed to identify the demographic characteristics of institutions that offer introductory courses in intercultural communication, the type of students taking such courses, class assignments, teaching and evaluation methods, and teacher qualifications. The results indicated that the basic intercultural communication course was most likely to be offered at a very small or very large university, with a low minority enrollment. In total, 17.8% of the departments offered at least one course they described as intercultural communication. The course was primarily offered at the junior level, with no prerequisites. Most instructors give at least two examinations during the course and require a term paper and an oral report. The most commonly used teaching method was the lecture, followed by small group participation. Most of the instructors held professional rank and had taught the course less than five semesters. Cultural differences, and their effect on communication, was ranked as the most important course topic. The number of institutions offering such courses has rapidly increased during the last six years, suggesting that intercultural communication may be an important feature of upper-level undergraduate coursework in the future. (HTH)

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The Status of the Basic Course in Intercultural Communication at U.S. Colleges and Universities

Steven A. Beebe
Department of Communication
University of Miami
Coral Gables, FL 33124

Thompson Biggers
Department of Communication
University of Miami
Coral Gables, FL 33124

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THE STATUS OF THE BASIC COURSE IN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AT U.S. COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Abstract

This paper reports the results of a survey of U.S. Colleges and Universities to assess the status of intercultural communication instruction. A questionnaire was designed to identify: the demographic characteristics of institutions that do and do not offer introductory courses in intercultural communication, the type of student taking intercultural communication courses, class assignments, methods of student evaluation, teaching methods, instructor qualifications, basic units of instruction, underlying approaches used in designing and teaching the courses, and the most widely used textbooks. A systematic sample of 387 speech communication departments was drawn from the 1983 SCA Directory. Survey results are summarized and conclusions about future trends in intercultural communication instruction are discussed.

The Status of the Basic Course in Intercultural Communication at U.S. Colleges and Universities.

During the past two decades the teaching of intercultural communication has increased dramatically. Barna and Jain (1978) trace the origin of intercultural communication instruction to the publication of Hall's (1959) The Silent Language, Oliver's (1962) Culture and Communication and Smith's (1966) Communication and Culture. These works, coupled with increased interest in intercultural communication, served as catalysts for teaching intercultural communication courses in the 1960's. Intercultural communication course offerings proliferated following the International Communication Association's recognition of a Division of Intercultural Communication in 1970. The Speech Communication Association designated 1970 as the Intercultural-International Speech Communication Year and created a Commission for International and Intercultural Communication. SCA also devoted its 1970 annual meeting to intercultural/international communication. The development of textbooks and other instructional materials paralleled the growing interest in intercultural communication as a curricular addition to colleges and universities (cf. Rich 1974, Prosser 1978, Sitaram and Cogdell 1976).

Given the recency of the development of intercultural communication courses, few systematic attempts have been made to chart curricular approaches to the course. Prosser (1974) complied a collection of intercultural communication syllabi from U.S. colleges and universities. The syllabi revealed considerable diversity in approaches to course content. As described by Prosser,

> The collection . . .includes three major types of course outlines for intercultural communication courses in general; for communication and social change/development courses; and a small number for international communication (with a media emphasis).

Based upon Prosser's collection of syllabi, university and college catalogue course descriptions, the Directory of Graduate Programs in Speech Communication Arts and Sciences: 1977-1978, and their own "personal knowledge," Barna and Jain (1978) made the following observations about the status of intercultural communication instruction at both graduate and undergraduate levels: (1) approximately 200 colleges and universities offer at least one course in intercultural communication; (2) about 60 colleges and universities offer graduate courses in intercultural communication; (3) students who take intercultural communication courses represent diverse disciplines; and (4) there is a growing trend to include units in intercultural communication in introductory communication courses, as well as in a selected number of introductory courses of other disciplines.

Though provocative, these early attempts leave many questions unanswered. We wonder which institutions tend to offer such courses. Are there demographic characteristics which differentiate between those who offer intercultural courses and those who do not? What is generally taught in these courses? Assignments, evaluation techniques, teaching methods, units of instruction, and textbook selection are all of interest. Finally, we wonder who is teaching these courses. What is the rank, training, experience of the average instructor of an intercultural communication course? Answers to these questions would be valuable to instructors, administrators, and others interested in communication curriculum development.

The purpose of this study is to systematically assess the status of the basic course in intercultural communication at U.S. colleges and universities. We focused on the introductory course in intercultural communication reasoning that this would allow the most broad analysis of the status of intercultural instruction. If any courses are offered there will certainly be a basic course. If we expanded our focus we could be examining a large number of essentially incomprable elements and aggregate results would be uninterpretable. A questionnaire based upon the conclusions of Barna and Jain (1978) was designed to answer the research questions.

PROCEDURE

A systematic sample of 387 communication departments was drawn from the 1983 SCA Directory. The investigators first eliminated from the initial list, departments which did not have a "communication" or "speech communication" area, division, or title listed in the directory. Thus, an institution that listed only drama or journalism was eliminated from the population. Budget considerations dictated that questionnaires be mailed to 25% of the remaining institutions. The investigators developed a mailing list for the questionnaire by randomly selecting a number between one and four, selecting the institution that fell in this position on the address list as the first member of the sample and then selecting every fourth entry from that point to the end. This systematic random sample was used rather than a completely random sample to maximize the probability of representativeness. The SCA Directory lists institutions according to state and this method assured that one-fourth of the institutions from all areas of the U.S.

would be contacted. The sample includes junior and community colleges, as well as four-year colleges and universities.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data from the returned questionnaires were coded and entered for computer analysis. Information from open-ended questions was categorized by listing, examining these responses and creating appropriate catagories. Other questions produced nominal and ordinal-level data. The data was cleaned by examining frequencies and making comparisons with the original questionnaires. Catagories were occasionally combined to allow for meaningful examination of the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Sample

The first section of the results will be a description of the respondents. A total of 380 survey instruments were mailed to usable addresses. Seven survey instruments were returned, undelivered, for a variety of reasons ranging from death of the addressee to non-existence of the institution. A total of 138 responses were received, generating a 36% return rate. Table one reports the demographics of the overall sample and a comparison of those institutions offering and not offering an intercultural course.

As can be seen from table one, responses were from a broad range of institutions. Size, as measured by number of students, majors, faculty (both part and full-time) all varied considerably. Type of institution

Table One
Demographics of Reporting Institutions

Type of Institution		Total Sample	No Course	Course Available	Significance
	Junior College	41	39	2	
		30.6%	95.1%	4.9%	
	College	43	34	9	
		32.1%	79.1%	20.9%	
	University	50	37	13	
		37.3%	74.0%	26.0%	.03
Financial Support of Institution	Private	31	26	5	
		23%	83.6%	16%	
	State	80	65	15	
		59.3%	81.3%	18.8%	
	Church	24	20	4	
		17.8%	83.3%	16.7%	NSD
Number of Undergraduates	2000-5000	90	75	15	
		67.2%	83.3%	16.7%	
	5001-15,000	31	29	2	
		23.1%	93.5%	6.5%	
	Over 15,000	13	6	7	
		9.7%	46.2%	53.8%	.001
Number of Communication Majors	1-50	55	48	7	
		50%	87.3%	12.7%	
	51-100	19	14	5	
		17.3%	73.7%	26.3%	
	Over 100	36	26	10	
		32.7%	72.2%	27.8%	NSD
Number of Full-time Faculty in Department	1-5	75	66	9	
		59.1%	88%	12%	
	Over 5	52	38	14	
		40.9%	73.1%	26.9%	.05
Number of Part-time Faculty in Department	1-5	75	56	14	
		59.1%	80%	20%	
	Over 5	52	22	6	
		40.9%	78.6%	21.4%	NSD
Graduate Program	Yes	34	25	9	
		25.2%	73.5%	26.5%	
	No	101	86	15	
		74.8%	85.1%	14.9%	NSD
Name of Department	Speech/ Communication	101	82	19	
		77.1%	81.2%	18.8%	
	Other	30	25	5	
		22.9%	83.3%	16.7%	NSD

		Total Sample	No Course	Course Available	Significance
Similar Courses	yes	23	15	8	
		17.6%	65.2%	34.8%	
	No	108	93	15	
		82.4%	86.1%	13.9%	.03
% Black non-Hispanic	1-15%	103	82	21	
		83.7%	79.6%	20.4%	
	Over 15%	20	19	1	
		16.3%	95%	5%	NSD
% Hispanic	1-15%	93	77	16	
		93%	82.8%	17.2%	
	Over 15%	7	4	3	
		7%	57.1%	42.9%	NSD
% Asian	1-15%	101	79	22	
		97.1%	78.2%	21.8%	
	Over 15%	3	3	0	
		2.9%	100%	0%	NSD
% Native American	1-15	71	57	14	
		78%	80.3%	19.7%	
	Over 15%	20	17	3	
		22%	85%	15%	NSD
% of European Ancestry	1-30%	22	17	5	
		26.5%	77.3%	22.7%	
	31-75%	20	17	3	
		24.1%	85%	15%	
	76-100%	41	32	9	
		49.4%	78%	22%	NSD
% of Foreign Student	1-10%	109	89	20	
		94%	81.7%	18.3%	
	Over 10%	7	4	3	
		6%	57.1%	42.9%	NSD
Do you Plan Such a Course in the Future?	Yes	19	17	2	
		19.8%	89.5%	10.5%	
	No	73	73	0	
		76%	100%	0%	
	Uncertain	4	4	0	
		4.2%	100%	0%	.02

(junior college, college or university) and financial affiliation data indicate that a full range of institutions responded. The majority of the sample call themselves speech or communication departments. One-fourth have a graduate program. The ethic mix at most institutions is predominantly of European ancestry with less than fifteen percent of the student body coming from any one minority group.

Comparison of Schools with and without A Basic Intercultural Communication Courses.

One of the goals of this survey was the comparison of institutions offering courses in intercultural communication and those who do not. A significant linear trend developed in which universities reported a greater tendency to offer a course in intercultural communication than did colleges ($x^2_{(2,\ \underline{N} = 138)} = 7.23$, $\underline{p} = .027$). A second measure of institutional size was the number of undergraduate students enrolled. This measure produced an interesting trend with small and large institutions reporting a greater likelihood of offering a course than middle sized institutions ($x^2_{(2,\ \underline{N} = 138)} = 14.28$, $\underline{p} = .0008$).

Size of the department contacted was measured in several ways; number of majors, number of full time faculty, and number of part time faculty. The number of majors and part-time faculty were not significant discriminators but number of full-time faculty was ($x^2_{(1,\ \underline{N} = 127)} = 3.75$, $\underline{p} = .05$).

Additionally, we were interested in determining if the financial affiliation of the institution was a determining factor in the offering

of an intercultural communication course. Affiliation was not a significant factor in terms of course offerings. The presence of a graduate program in the department contacted was not a significant discriminator even though a linear trend was observed in which institution with graduate programs had a stronger tendency to offer a course.

The name of the responding department was interesting since we had attempted to eliminate all but those identified as speech/communication. Eight different titles were reported. When collapsed into two categories (speech/communication, other) no significant differences were observed.

When asked if courses similar to intercultural communication are offered in other departments on their campus the respondents produced a noteworthy result. If the department reported the existence of a course in intercultural, then it was likely to report that similar courses were being offered in other areas. The result is significant ($x^2_{(1, N = 131)} = 4.37$, $p = .037$) but difficult to interpret. It is possible that persons who are involved in intercultural Communication are more aware of similar offerings in other areas. Alternatively, it is possible that the existence of this course indicates an institutional awareness of cultural issues and therefore more offerings overall. Most frequently these courses were offered in Anthropology (25.8%), Sociology (16.17%), Education (12.9%), and Social Sciences (12.9%).

We asked the reporting institutions to tell us the ethnic makeup of their student enrollment. The trend for all of the reporting institutions was similar. Institutions with larger minority enrollments were the ones that did not tend to offer courses in intercultural communication. This trend was true for all of the minority groups that

were reported. No schools with large (over 25%) minority enrollment offer intercultural classes. This trend was not significant, however.

This trend seems to be reversed when we asked about the percentage of foreign students enrolled in the institution. 18.3% of the institutions with 10% or fewer foreign students reported having a course. Of those institutions with more than 10% of their students coming from foreign lands, 42.9% reported having a course. The trend approaches significance.

In total, 17.8% of all the departments contacted offer at least one course that they would describe as intercultural communication. The most common title for this course is Intercultural Communication with a few schools (7) reporting other course labels. Of those who do not currently offer intercultural communication courses, 18.1% suggest that they will offer such a course in the near future. 4.3% of those responding are not sure if they will offer such a course in the near future while 77.7% are sure that they will not. The result is significant ($x^2_{(2,\ \underline{N} = 96)} = 8.28$, $\underline{p} = .015$).

Description of the Basic Course in Intercultural Communication

The remainder of this article reports information about the basic course in Intercultural Communication as it is taught at the responding institutions. Table two represents a compilation of this data.

Table Two

Description of the Basic Course in Intercultural Communication

Course Level	Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Senior		
	6	3	19	5		
	18.2%	9.1%	57.6%	15.2%		
	Yes	No				
Prerequisites	11	23				
	32.4%	67.6%				
	Yes	No				
Is Course Required	6	24				
	20%	80%				
	For Majors	For Others				
	4	2				
	13.3%	6.7%				
	Increase	Decrease	No Change			
Enrollment Over Last 5 years	15	2	9			
	55.6%	7.4%	33.3%			
# of Exam	1	2	3	4	5	5+
	1	17	5	2	1	2
	3.6%	60.7%	17.9%	7.1%	3.6%	7.1%
	Required	Not Required				
Termpaper	25	5				
	83.3%	16.7%				
Oral Report	25	5				
	83.3	16.7				
Other Project	50%	50%				
Type of Other Project	Book Review	Interviews	Journal	Group Project	Report.	
	3	2	4	3	4	
	18.8%	12.5%	25%	18.8%	25%	

Teaching Methods — Rank Ordering

1. Lecture
2. Small Groups
3. Case Studies, Student Reports
4. Guest Speakers
5. Films
6. Group Reports
7. Role Playing
8. Field Trips
9. Video Taping, Other

	Teaching Assistant	Part-time	Lecturer	Asst Prof	Assoc Prof	Prof
Faculty	1	1	1	14	5	11
	3%	3%	3%	42.4%	15.2%	33.3%

# of Times Instructor Taught Class	1-5	6-10	10-15	15+
	22	3	2	1
	78.6%	10.7%	7.1%	3.6%

# of Courses Instructor has Taken	Undergrad Courses None	1-5	Grad Courses None	1-5	5+
	26	7	15	17	1
	78.8%	21.2%	45.5%	51.5%	3%

# of Workshops Instructor Attended	None	1-5	6-10	11-15	15+
	7	16	8	1	1
	21.3%	48.5%	24.2%	3%	3%

	Alternate Years	Once a Year	Twice a Year	As Needed
Course Offered	8	13	7	5
	24.2%	39.4%	21.2%	15.2%

Course Content Ranked From Most Important to Least Important

1. cultural differences and effects on communication
2. cultural similarities and differences between ethnic groups and cultures
3. intercultural contacts and contexts
4. language and culture, bilingualism and translation problems
5. specific cultural patterns and effects on intercultural communication
6. nonverbal communication

7. formation of in and out groups and ethnocentrism
8. culture shock and cultural adaptation
9. ethnic groups, subcultures and racial groups
10. subjective cultural theory
11. racial, ethnic and national stereotypes
12. theories of assimilation

Approaches to the Course Rank Ordered.

1. Social Interaction Approach: Study of the effects of cultural differences and traits on perception and other communication processes.
2. Communication Theory Approach: Focus on the key concepts of communication theory and how they manifest in interracial, interethnic and intercultural settings.
3. Cultural Group Approach: Study of communication behaviors and cultural patterns of a single racial, ethnic or nationality group and the comparison of communication patterns of various ethnic or cultural groups.
4. Social Problems Approach: Focus on the communication aspects of interracial, interethnic and intercultural problems (e.g., prejudice, discrimination, culture shock, international conflicts, assimilation).

Text Used

	N	%
Samovar & Porter	9	40.9%
Condon & Yousef	5	22.7%
Fisher & Merrill	2	9.1%
Kraft	1	4.5%
Sitaram	1	4.5%
Unspecified	4	18.2%

Students

The course is primarily offered at the junior level (54.2%) and generally has no prerequisite. If a prerequisite is required, it is most often Introduction to Communication (36.4%). The intercultural communication course was generally not a required course. Of the institutions responding, those reporting increases in enrollment over the last five years outnumber those reporting decreases ten to one.

Evaluation and Assignments

Most instructors give at least two examinations during the course. Most also require both a term paper and an oral report. Other major projects assigned include book reviews, interviews, journals, and group projects.

Teaching Methods

Respondents were asked to indicate the percentage of time they used each of several teaching methods. Additional spaces were provided for the inclusion of methods overlooked by the researchers. Responses were categorized so that a response between 1% and 10% was assigned a 9, 11% to 20% and 8 and so on. Responses were then rank ordered. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to determine which items were statistically different from the others. In the ranking reported in Table Two, each item is significantly (Alpha .05) different from each other item.

The most commonly used teaching method is lecture followed by small group participation. Case studies and student reports are used about equally. Field trips and video taping are the least frequently used methods.

Instructor

Most instructors who teach the course hold professorial rank and have taught the courses less than five times. The course is most frequently offered once a year but many institutions offer it twice each year. The majority of those teaching the course have had no undergraduate courses and one to five graduate courses in Intercultural Communication. The majority of the respondents have participated in one or more seminars or workshops on Intercultural Communication.

Course Content

Respondents were asked to rate the amount of coverage given to various topics in their course. These ratings were converted to rank order data and the resulting list tested using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for goodness of fit using a normal distribution. Each item was statistically different from each of the others (Alpha .05). The resulting list (reported in Table Two) indicates these respondants feelings about the relative importance of various topics. Cultural differences and their effect on communication was most important while theories of assimilation was least.

Text

The most widely used text among respondents, was Samovar and Porter's (1976) Intercultural Communication: A Reader. Condon and Yousef's (1975) An Introduction to Intercultural Communication was selected as the second most widely used text. Fisher and Merrill (1976) (8.3%) and Sitram and Cogdell (1976) (4.2%) were also mentioned as authors of texts used by the respondents.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Several conclusions about the status of intercultural communication instruction in the U.S. seem possible. Potentially, the most important finding is that the course has grown in several ways over the last few years. Barna and Jain estimated that 200 institutions were offering courses in 1978. If our sample is representative, and 17.8% of all U.S. Colleges and Universities offer at least one course in intercultural communication, then approximately 275 institutions are involved today. This would represent an increase of 37.5% over the last six years. Reporting institutions also suggest that where the course is offered, the enrollment has increased over the last few years. Finally, this trend seems destined to continue as 18.1% of the reporting institutions suggest that they will offer such a course in the near future.

A course in intercultural communication will most likely exist at an institution that is a university, is fairly large, has a low mirority enrollment or a large foreign student enrollment. The financial support of the institution is a determining factor as to whether an intercultural communication course is offered. The size of the offering department is not a significant determinor of the presence of an intercultural course but the trend is for larger departments to offer such a course.

The basic course in intercultural communication is most commonly offered at the Junior level and usually has no prerequisite. The course is generally not required of any student. Two examinations and several types of projects are most commonly required. Lecture and small group work are the most often used teaching methods. Faculty of these courses is usually of professorial rank and has taught the course five or fewer

times. Faculty preparation has most often been in the form of graduate courses and workshops.

The course is generally offered once a year. Cultural differences and their effect on communication is the most important topic covered in the course and theories of assimilation is the least. The social interaction approach is the most common and the social problems approach is the least common.

Several limitations to the study should be mentioned. The results are based on a sample of the population so the results must be extrapolated to the population in general. Extrapolation seems warranted since the data appear to come from a broad cross-section of the sample. Caution is always in order, however, when one is speculating. Some nonsignificant findings may be a result of small response numbers. Reported trends, while interesting, are only trends. Larger samples might allow us to determine if these trends represent real differences.

Given the recent increase in enrollment in intercultural communication courses, one may expect intercultural communication to be an important upper division course in the future. Even though this survey was not specifically designed to identify future trends of intercultural communication instruction, it would appear that the student constituency will continue to grow.

There is still much work to be done in developing the intercultural communication course as a mainstay fixture in the undergraduate communication curriculum. Future research is needed to determine why more schools do not offer such a course. In addition to collecting demographic statistics of institutions that do and do not offer the course,

researchers might measure attitudes toward the course and course content to help determine why more schools do not offer the course. The relative youth of the intercultural communication area within the communication discipline, coupled with the increased interest in the basic intercultural communication course, indicates that intercultural communication courses will probably continue to proliferate. The results reported here begin to provide some needed understanding of basic trends in intercultural communication education.

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